

SNOW BALL CHAUFFEURS. by melancholyink

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Summary:

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Dare you say it—it was nice.

SNOW BALL CHAUFFEURS.

With every passing day, Hawkins gets colder.

The temperature drops and along comes the cheery holiday spirits and the hope for snow, but each cold breeze just sends shivers down your spine and brings you back to the junkyard full of demodogs. Back to fighting for your life and to protecting the kids that were with you. You look back to your car knowing there was a well-used axe and newly stocked first aid kit hidden under blankets in the back of your trunk--you knew better this time around, you had to be prepared... for anything.

You turn away from your car and knock three times on the front door of the Hargrove/Mayfield household, and smile at the crooked poinsettia wreath that hangs in front of you before quickly returning your hand to the pockets of your jacket.

The door opens and Billy stands in front of you, the bruises from his fight with Steve long healed by now, but the bruise on his neck--passed off as a hickey, surely--from the syringe of anesthesia his own step sister had plunged in to him was still visible, now yellowing.

He takes a drag of the half-smoked cigarette in his hand, "See something you like?"

You frown, unsure if Billy even knew about the Snow Ball. Or if Max

even wanted him to know, "I'm here to pick up Max."

Billy rolls his eyes, "Whatever."

"Thanks again for the ride," Max smiles as she gets out of your car.

"Of course," you smile back, "I'm taking you home too, so just look out for me when you're ready to leave." She nods before heading in to the school.

You pull in to one of the many empty parking spots; most parents just dropping their kids off and waiting for a phone call to come back and pick them up. Looking across the lot, you see Hopper and Joyce, even Steve; and you know both Jonathan and Nancy are inside, but it still didn't feel right to leave. What if something happened?

Picking at the polish on your nails, you start to think about the junkyard. How nervous--no, *terrified* you were for Dustin, Lucas, and Max's safety as you got them in the old school bus. How you had stood your ground when Steve tried to get you in too, but you weren't going to let him fight those demodogs alone. You had called him a fucking idiot.

You think about the Byers' house. A place that had been a safe haven, turned in to a madhouse. How tightly your hands had gripped the axe as your heart raced and you wondered if you were going to die that

night. How you had screamed as Billy threw punch after punch at Steve, trying to pull them apart.

You shake your head, trying to stop the catastrophic thinking.

Grabbing your keys you slam your door open and closed, hands again finding their home in your jacket pockets, practically running across the parking lot to Steve's BMW and knocking softly at his passenger side window.

Steve is caught off guard, but still rolls down a window, "What?"

"Let me in."

His face doesn't change at your answer, and he repeats himself, "What?"

You sigh, "Just unlock your door and let me in, Harrington."

He shakes his head, but complies and reaches over to unlock your door; you quickly get in.

The prominent purple bruises from his fight with Billy are gone, save for a few along his jaw that were still fading to match his skin tone. And all of the cuts had scabbed and healed, leaving only a ghost of a scar through his top lip. You feel a small twinge of guilt in the pit of your stomach, you haven't spoken to him since that night at the

Byers', you haven't bothered to check on him after the beating he took from Billy.

You give him a small smile, "It looks a lot better."

"Yeah, it's nice being able to see out of both eyes again." he laughs, "What're you even doing here?"

"I drove Max, you?"

"Dustin."

You nod, "Oh, right," you remember, "he was saying something about you giving him--" you hold up air quotes and laugh, "--'hair secrets' the last time I saw him."

"Last time you saw him?" Steve raises an eyebrow, but the small wince from the movement wasn't lost on you.

"Ever since you stole my title as *best baby sitter ever*, I've been working part time at the library."

"Sorry about that," he frowns.

"Don't be," you smile and shake your head, "the kids love you."

Hearing that puts a smile on his face, one different from any you had seen from him before. But, it wasn't like you were close, so what would you know?

An uncomfortable silence takes over the car. The sounds of your fidgeting seem amplified, making you too stiff to find a comfortable sitting position to be in.

Steve sighs, "This is weird, isn't it? Us hanging out."

"A little."

"You would think now that we've almost died together—"

"Twice."

"Now that we've almost died together *twice*, " he amends, "That we could at least sit together in a comfortable silence. We did it in what? Biology?"

You're surprised he remembers the sophomore year class you shared, "The biology class you slept through?"

"What?" He shrugs, "It was first period! I'm not a morning person!"

The tension in the air lightens as you both genuinely laugh, what feels like the first light-hearted moment you've had in a while.

"You've changed since then, though." You twist in the passenger seat, moving to face Steve.

"I have?" he sounds nervous, unsure.

You nod.

"Good change or bad change?"

"Definitely good." You turn your head, watching as a few snowflakes start to fall from the night sky, "You were kind of a douchebag."

Steve doesn't know whether to laugh or to groan, and does a weird combination of the two, "Yeah I know," he says with a twinge of embarrassment. "It all seems so long ago." He leans his head backwards, closing his eyes.

You hum in agreement.

There's a loud bang, and you both startle with your heads whipping towards the sound. A small group of kids laugh, not having meant to push the door to exit the school's gymnasium so hard and causing it

to slam against the brick of the wall behind it.

You glance at each other with a sigh relief--just kids having a nice time.

It takes a few minutes for your heart to stop racing and you wouldn't be surprised if Steve's heart was racing too.

"Hey," you begin, "I'm sorry I never called to see how you were doing after, well, *you know...*" You're chewing your lip and keeping your eyes focused on your lap, "I should have."

"Oh, it's no biggie," he brushes it off, "We've all got shit going on, it's fine."

"No, it's really not," you frown, your eyebrows knitting together, "I should've been a better friend."

Steve turns his focus on you, wholly this time, "Friends?" he asks.

"Yeah, we almost died together—"

"*Twice.*"

You smirk, "We've almost died together *twice* now," you turn to

match his gaze, focusing on him, "I think that makes us friends, Steve."

Something in the air changed, it was more relaxed than it had been when you first climbed in to the car tonight. It was more relaxed than any time you had interacted with Steve before.

Dare you say it—it was nice.

"Yeah, friends."